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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Monday, December 10, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Winter Fruit for the Thrifty." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Of all the problems of the family menu-maker or meal-planner, the dessert problem seems to take the most time.

Let's go to market this morning and see what fruits are good buys at this time of year. Dried fruits are usually the cheapest of all -- especially prunes and raisins, peaches and apricots and dried apples. Then, some canned fruits will fit into even a very slim budget. The marketing experts tell me that sliced peaches, some cherries, canned applesauce and crushed or diced pineapple usually are among the best buys in canned fruits.

The specialists over at the Bureau of Home Economics who have been planning low-cost food budgets, have worked out the necessary amount of fruit a family of five needs each week. Even when the family's expenses have to be cut right down to the minimum, some fruit is essential for health. So the specialists allow one and a half pounds of dried fruit and about three and a half pounds of other inexpensive fruit, fresh or canned, for five people each week. You'd be surprised at the many excellent desserts you can get out of this allowance of cheap fruit.

Suppose now that your weekly supply of dried fruits includes prunes. Properly cooked, prunes make a large number of excellent desserts. The best buy in prunes -- that is, the most prune meat for the money -- is usually the smaller fruit, that come about seventy prunes to the pound. As a rule this size costs less per pound than the larger ones. So, half a pound of this size will give about thirty or forty prunes, and that will allow six or eight prunes for each member of the family. When you make plain stewed prunes, remember to wash them first, then soak them in the water you will later use for cooking them. Simmer them until just tender. Never boil them hard. And add only enough sweetening to give good flavor, not enough to make them oversweet. For a change from plain stewed prunes, spiced prunes are good. Cook prunes for about fifteen minutes with sugar to taste and with a mixture of whole cloves, allspice and stick cinnamon, tied up in a little cheesecloth bag. Then add a little vinegar for tartness and cook about ten minutes longer, until the sirup is fairly thick. Remove the bag of spices before serving. Stewed prunes, cut in small pieces, and molded in a lemon gelatin mixture are easy to make, very good, and very tempting looking. If you have eggs, you can make prune whip and prune souffle. Then, prune tarts, pie and turnovers are still other selections.

Sometimes for variety you can use a combination of dried fruits. Prunes and apricots cooked slowly together in a covered dish in the oven makes a fine winter dessert, good hot or cold. Prunes and apricots also make a good filling for pie. Dried peaches and raisins or dried peaches and dried apples are other good combinations.

Dried peaches are cheaper than canned peaches and you can use them in much the same way. They make delicious peach tapioca, peach pie or cobbler. When stewed they make a delicious peach sauce to serve with meat or with cake. Most dried fruits are a good source of minerals, you know. And dried peaches are a source of iron as well as of vitamin A. Raisins are another cheap dried fruit that go a long way in dessert-making. Raisin cookies and cakes, raisin suet pudding or rice pudding, raisin sauce and even jellied raisins, made like jellied prunes, are all delicious low-cost dessert possibilities.

As for the canned fruit on the low-cost budget, you'll find that canned sliced peaches cost less than canned half peaches and that generally crushed or diced pineapple or broken slices of pineapple cost less than the large perfect slices. A small can of pineapple will make a good pineapple upside down cake, enough for Sunday dessert for a family of five. A small can of crushed pineapple will be enough for sauce over cake or over cornstarch pudding.

You can make delicious fruit pickles right in the midst of winter using dried fruit. Dried peaches or prunes, spiced and pickled, are delicious with meat or with your holiday fowl. Wash the fruit well, soak it overnight, then put it in a thin sirup made of vinegar and sugar and seasoned with whole cloves and stick cinnamon. Cook just a few minutes.

The chief points to remember about preparing dried fruit are: Wash with the greatest care <u>before</u> soaking; use as little water as possible for soaking; cook in the soaking water; never cook too long. Some fruits are tender enough after they soak to need almost no cooking.

Last week we were talking about the old-time steamed plum pudding. Today I'd like to mention a new variety of plum pudding -- <u>chilled</u> <u>jellied</u> plum pudding. Make it with a lemon gelatin base and combine in the mixture several different kinds of dried fruits -- prunes, apricots, figs, raisins, whatever you like. Mold in the shape of plum pudding and serve cold with whipped or plain cream. If you want the pudding to look a little fancy, you might add some candied fruit -- candied cherries, perhaps.

That brings us to our menu for today -- an inexpensive menu: Meat and Vegetable Stew; Hot biscuit; Sliced Chinese cabbage salad with French dressing -- nice served in a bowl; Jellied plum pudding and cream.

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